DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 079 HE 008 551

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TITLE The Current Status of Faculty Unionism in Higher Education: A Statistical Analysis.
PUB DATE Jul 76
NOTE 5p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Arbitration; *Collective Bargaining; *College Faculty; College Teachers; *Community Colleges; Educational Trends; Growth Patterns; Higher Education; *Private Colleges; State Colleges; State Universities; Statistical Analysis; *Trend Analysis; Union Members; *Unions; Universities

ABSTRACT

This analysis presents a view of the current status of unionism based on statistics reported in the "Chronicle of Higher Education" and from the author's own calculations. It is shown that each year for at least three years, unions have held more elections on public and on four-year campuses than on private and two-year campuses. Each year the percentage of union wins to total election attempts has decreased. Private and four-year campuses have felt an increase in organizing attempts of 2.5 percent since 1974 but unions have felt a concomitant decrease in their ability to win on those campuses of 3.4 percent over the same period. The only category in which unions are having unchanging success is the two-year campus. It is predicted that the more unions attempt to penetrate the realm of four-year and private campuses the less will be their chances of winning. However, unions have won almost 89 percent of all contests. (Author/LBH)

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THE CURRENT STATUS OF FACULTY UNIONISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

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University of Chicago
July 1976

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THE CURRENT STATUS OF FACULTY UNIONISM
IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Unions are attempting more elections per year than ever before in the 13 year history of faculty unionism--but they are also losing more frequently. This analysis presents a balanced view of the current status of unionism based on statistics reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education and from my own calculations.

Faculty union elections increased by 35 for the 1975-76 academic year but there were 7 more rejections in 1976 than in 1975 yielding a net overall loss of union chances of winning an election of half a percentage point. Of the 94 total elections, 76 resulted in union victories and 18 in union rejections. This means that in 1976 unions were winning 80.9% of the time and losing 19.1% of the time compared with 1975 when the win/reject ratio was 81.4% and 18.6% respectively.

Cumulated statistics for all elections held since faculty unionism began show a total of 520 attempts to unionize of which 88.6% have resulted in union victories and 11.3% in union rejections. This represents an overall increase in rejections of 3.4% since 1974 when unions showed a winning percentage of 92% of all attempted elections. Clearly, the trend is toward declining union victories and increasing union rejections--and this despite the increasing number of election attempts. Thus, the possibility of a sure win for the unions decreases slightly overall each year.

Of course, even one union victory increases the net percentage of colleges and universities unionized (holding the base constant), and so the

trend is obviously toward greater unionization of higher education but at greater costs in time, money and energy for union organizers. Presently about 16% of all faculty of higher education in the United States are represented by a collective bargaining agent in 461 institutions, or about 15% of all post-secondary institutions. This represents amazing growth when compared with the overall growth of the labor movement in the non-educational sector.

The Public-Private Distinction

Of the 94 elections in 1976, 74 or 78.7% were held on public campuses and 20 or 21.3% were held on private campuses. This represents an 11% increase over 1975 in the number of elections held on public campuses. However, there was a corresponding increase in the number of rejections on public campuses (11 rejections for an increase of 6 over 1975) yielding a loss in the ability of a union to win a public campus election of 2.5%. Nevertheless, unions still won 85% of all public campus elections in 1976.

On private campuses only one more election was held in 1976 than in 1975 and represented 21.3% of all elections held. This is significant for it means a relative decline in private campus organizing of almost 11% since 1975. Clearly, union activity is concentrated more heavily on public campuses than on private campuses. Private campus rejections increased by 3.4% for 1976 lending weight to the declining acceptance percentages for overall union organizing.

The Two-Year-Four-Year Distinction

In keeping with the trend of more organizing campaigns generally, elections on 2-year campuses increased by 15 over 1975 and were up by 20 on 4-year campuses. However, with an increasing emphasis on 4-year campuses, the percentage of 2-year elections dropped from nearly 50% in 1975 to 43% in 1976. The corresponding gain in 4-year elections was about 2.5% giving an overall 1976 breakdown of 43.1% of all elections on 2-year campuses and

53.2% for 4-year campuses. The increasing 4-year campus emphasis actually began in 1975, however, when, for the first time, more than half of the elections were on 4-year campuses.

As with public campuses, the percentage of union wins on 4-year campuses dropped 2% in 1976 (to 68%) with a corresponding increase in rejections by 4-year campus faculty to 32%. The only category of union activity which showed an increase in union win ability was the 2-year campus which has a win/reject ratio of about 95% to 5% respectively. Ironically, union organizers are beginning to spend relatively less time on exactly those kind of campuses where they are winning the most. The ability to win on 2-year campuses has remained constant for several years; out of 281 total election attempts, unions have won in all but 8, giving them a victory figure of over 97%.

In sum, each year for at least three years unions have held relatively (and absolutely) more elections on public and on 4-year campuses than on private and 2-year campuses. Likewise, each year the percentage of union wins to total election attempts has decreased. Private and 4-year campuses have felt an increase in organizing attempts of 2.5% since 1974 but unions have felt a concomitant decrease in their ability to win on those campuses of 3.4% over the same period. The only category in which unions are having unchanging success is the 2-year campus . Thus, it may be predicted that the more unions attempt to penetrate the realm of 4-year and private campuses the less will be their chances of winning. However, the analysis of rejection figures should not blind the reader to the overwhelming net growth of unions in higher education. Presently, unions have won almost 89% of all contests.